

# LITHUANIA ACTION BY BUSH EXPECTED

## Suspension of One or More Sets of Talks With Soviets Is Reported an Option

By **ANDREW ROSENTHAL**

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WASHINGTON, April 23 — After meeting with members of Congress on Tuesday, President Bush is expected to announce some limited American actions in response to the Soviet Union's economic crackdown in Lithuania, Administration officials said tonight.

The officials declined to say specifically what Mr. Bush would do, but the options he has been considering include the suspension of one or more of the five sets of trade and commercial negotiations now under way with the Soviet Union.

"We will be taking action, mostly in the economic domain, that will express U.S. displeasure and U.S. concern about Soviet behavior in Lithuania," an official said.

Administration officials said the actions contemplated by the United States were not intended to interfere with arms control negotiations or with the schedule for the next Soviet-American summit meeting, which is scheduled to begin late in May.

### Allies Are Consulted

The Administration had been delaying any retaliation for the Soviet Union's economic moves against the Lithuanians for as long as possible, hoping the Baltic crisis would resolve itself.

But as the Kremlin's sanctions tightened late last week, the United States began a round of consultations with its allies to make certain it had backing for whatever steps it might take.

The Administration also wanted to make sure it had the support of Congressional leaders before acting, the official said.

Officials said there has been some reluctance in the Administration to take action against the Soviet Union over Lithuania out of concern that it might interfere with the progress made over the last year or so in Soviet-American relations and disrupt efforts to forge a new political order in Eastern Europe.

But pressure has steadily built on Mr. Bush to respond in some way as Soviet actions in the Baltic republic have grown increasingly harsh. Mr. Bush discussed his options with President François Mitterrand of France last week at a meeting in Florida and with other Western leaders in telephone conversations and other diplomatic contacts over the weekend.

Marlin Fitzwater, Mr. Bush's spokesman, said today that Mr. Bush would consult with Congressional leaders on the matter before acting in the White House to

# U.S. will respond in the 'economic domain.'

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discuss the Lithuanian situation. "I would not expect any announcement on the courses of action from us before that point," Mr. Fitzwater said.

Mr. Fitzwater declined to say what, if anything, the White House would do in response. "The final decisions by the President have not been made," he said. Mr. Fitzwater said the United States saw encouraging signs of "flexibility" in the most recent Soviet statements on Lithuania.

Two of the negotiations that could be affected by sanctions against the Soviet Union — on civil aviation and on trade — are scheduled to resume on Tuesday. Officials said American negotiators had been instructed to proceed with both sets of talks.

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Using the trade talks as leverage against the Soviet Union could be particularly effective since they are a precursor to the granting of favorable tariff arrangements to the Soviet Union and an important milestone in Moscow's efforts to improve ties with the West.

#### Other Talks Under Way

The United States and the Soviet Union are also engaged in talks on an investment treaty, on the extension of import-export credits to Moscow, on tax agreements and on other commercial arrangements that Mr. Bush proposed last December in Malta during his meeting with President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

The two countries also recently completed negotiations on a new five-year grain agreement that was expected to be signed at the next meeting between Mr. Bush and Mr. Gorbachev, which is scheduled to be held in Washington from May 30 to June 3.

Agriculture Secretary Clayton K. Yeutter, asked about possible sanc-

tions during a luncheon with agriculture writers, ruled out using the grain pact with Moscow as leverage in the Lithuanian crisis.

"I don't believe there's any chance whatsoever of a grain embargo being used in that situation or in any other situation," Mr. Yeutter said.

At his daily news briefing today, Mr. Fitzwater was asked about reports from Moscow that quoted a Kremlin spokesman, Arkady Maslennikov, as saying the Soviet Government would not insist on an outright repeal of Lithuanian's declaration of independence. Mr. Maslennikov suggested that the Lithuanians could "freeze" their proclamation of independence, perhaps for a period of two years.

Mr. Fitzwater said: "The statements this morning do appear to show some flexibility. We are hopeful that that's the case."

He said the statements were "being factored in" as Mr. Bush contemplates his response to Moscow's latest moves in Lithuania.



## Evolution in Europe: Playing for Keeps, Playing for Time in Lithuania



Associated Press

Lithuanian officials said they would be willing to compromise with the Soviet Union but not as a condition for talks. Kazimiera Prunskiene, the Lith-

uanian Prime Minister, who received flowers yesterday from supporters at a rally in Stockholm, announced plans to begin offshore oil exploration.